

# Strategy Marked Struggle With Blockade Runners in Civil War

BY DR. R. W. SHUFELDT.

Some Stories Told by Youngest Officer of the Federal Gunboat Proteus—About a Third of Crew Consisted of Ordinary Seamen, With Balance Landsmen or Recruits, Most of Whom Had Never Been to Sea Before in Their Lives—Dozen or More Nationalities Represented—American Whaler, Mistaking Craft for the Florida, Used British Flag in Attempt to Evade Capture—Crew of Captured Jupiter Nearly Succeeds in Attempt at Mutiny—Rifles Thrown Overboard in Straw Mats—Tale of Rotten Pumpkin Which Reached Its Mark With Disastrous Effect.

**E**GAD, how she rolls and how she pitches! And well she may, for there is a heavy sea on, following upon a thirty-mile gale off the coast of Staten Island. The blue-black waves rise and fall like young mountains, here and there topped off with a snow-white crest. It is the U. S. gunboat Proteus, and the harbor pilot, Mr. Metcalf, is just taking his leave of her. Soon her commanding officer will open the official envelope containing his orders from the Navy Department and find that he is directed to report at Key West and join the East Gulf squadron, where additional instructions will be issued to him.

In due course this came about, and Lieut. Commander R. W. Shufeldt of our Navy was directed to cruise in the Gulf of Mexico and among the Bahamas, with the view of engaging, should he meet with either of them, the famous privateers, the Alabama and the Florida, and further to capture or to sink such blockade runners as the proteus fell in with. All this in the early sixties, when the civil war was at its height and there was no telling how it was to terminate.

There had been built, fitted out and commissioned three or four gunboats of exactly the same class as the Proteus, no one of them being of a model to either chase or capture the best class of blockade runners, as not one of them could make more than twelve knots and a short half an hour, while the aforesaid privateers outlasted them both in speed and in fighting capacity, although in the latter particular our gunboat had a fair chance, but no more, of coming out victorious in an encounter.

**T**he Proteus was full-officered, had a picked crew of two hundred men, and, being a screw steamer, stoutly built, she could carry a maximum battery for her size. This last consisted of eight smooth-bore thirty-two on the gun deck; a two-hundred-pound Parrot rifle amidships on the spar deck; two thirty-two-pound Parrot rifles, one on the forecabin and the other aft on the poop deck, and two twelve-pound brass Napoleons. She was two-masted—being schooner rig fore and aft—with no particular protection save oakum bales, placed in the gangways opposite her boilers.

My father was her commanding officer, and to the best of my recollection I was between thirteen and fourteen years of age when he selected me as his secretary and signal officer. From the start I was treated as a man grown, and in a very short time I quite lost sight of the fact that the captain of the Proteus was my father. Indeed, upon more than one occasion I was less favored than other officers in being selected for duties wherein the matter of danger had any part. I took the oath of allegiance in the old Navy Department building before Mr. Crosby, who was then Secretary of the Navy at the time, in Lincoln's cabinet.

The executive officer of the Proteus was the late Admiral Bartlett, J. Cromwell, and to the best of my belief I am the only officer of her complement now living, with the possible exception of Admiral Hoff, who was an ensign at the time of which I write.

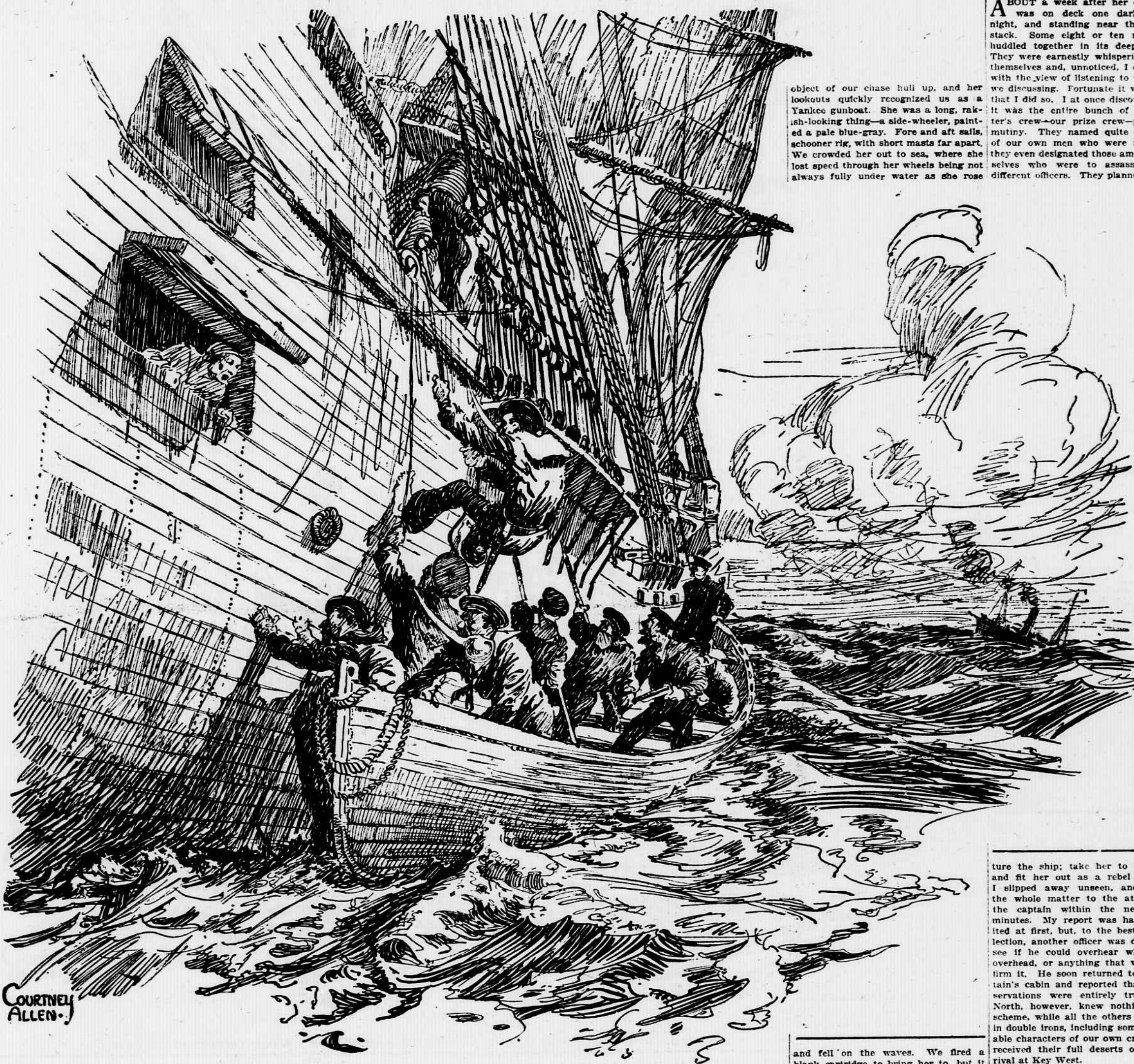
As already stated, our crew was a well selected one, a fair proportion of them being full seamen, about a third ordinary seamen, and the balance landsmen or recruits, most of whom had never been to sea before in their lives. Taken as a whole, some dozen or more nationalities were represented, including a Mohawk Indian, Chinaman and Japanese, with others from nearly every country in Europe. Some had been in the British and French navies, others had histories that they kept to themselves—but they were histories that were histories, I believe. One man, I well remember, had had his throat cut from ear to ear, and the scar used to gap open every time he threw his head back as he pulled down on the brails. And as for tattooing—well, some of the designs could hardly be described.

This crew of ours got a good rub at the very commencement of our cruise, as may easily be imagined from what I have said above about the old Proteus tossing and pitching in the heavy sea off the Staten Island coast, shortly after passing through "the Narrows." Fortunately the rolling of a vessel in a heavy sea has never affected me; so, during the gale in question, I went below onto the berth deck to see what was going on.

Most of the crew was there, and the main hatch of the spar deck had been covered. The hatch of the gun deck immediately below it was open. It had a shot-rack about its coamings, to hold some two dozen thirty-two-pound shot, intended for immediate use in action. A dozen or more of these shot had jumped the rack and were loose on the deck, rolling from side to side as the ship rolled. Then, too, a thirty-two-pound gun had parted from its bearings, and some of the old seamen were endeavoring to move it as it swung round and around in a most dangerous fashion. Many of the landsmen were seasick, as the deck was so slippery one could hardly keep his feet. I saw one poor fellow lying upon his side against a gun carriage, when one of the big thirty-two-pound shot came sliding across the deck, landing in the middle of his stomach, and nearly knocking the wind out of him; but he simply groaned and pushed it away with his hands. The whole scene was, indeed, a most remarkable one; and naturally I brought up in my mind the same sort of scene that Dumas described in his novel "93."

**H**OWEVER, we arrived in Key West in due time, cleaned up and stocked up in all particulars, and made ready to take our part in what the east gulf squadron had before it.

Our captain had an excellent photograph of the Florida, and upon one occasion at least we thought we had



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her. We were out of sight of land, in the Gulf of Mexico, when the vessel was sighted, and she was lying to, there being not a breath of a breeze at the time. Some smoke was seen coming up between the fore and main masts, and this we took as coming from the telescoped stack, knowing as we did that the Florida had that contrivance. In fact, the entire craft corresponded in all particulars with the photograph; and she had, from stem to stern, a mighty suspicious look about her.

The order was given to train all three of the parrot guns upon her, the pieces being loaded with percussion shell. On the berth deck our crew was eager for the engagement, and the four 32s were run out, loaded with solid shot. I heard the order given to train on her water line. Then came the order to me from the officer of the deck on the bridge to bend on the flags for a certain signal number, which, by chance, I happened to know.

"Who are you? and show your colors." Apparently no attention was paid to this, so a blank was fired from one of our Napoleons. Our launch and cutters were called away, and fifty picked men crowded into them. Another blank was fired—when she sent up to the mizen-peak the British flag. We were certain then that she had the right ship, and we could sink her before she had a chance to run her battery out. I had a powerful field glass, but even with that I could not detect any one aboard of her. In short time our boats reached her side, and the boarders swarmed aboard, most of them with pistol in hand and cutlass in teeth.

Everything remained quiet, however, and in about ten minutes our men were coming over her side to

remain the boats. They had two prisoners with them, who, when they came aboard, proved to be her captain and first mate. They had taken us for the Florida, and were, naturally, scared to the limit.

As a matter of fact, she was an American whaler, bound north, and the smoke we had seen was really from the cauldron amidships, in which they tried out her oil. Her captain was an old-time whaler, and his papers were all that they should be; but we didn't drive the scare out of him until he had drained the second drink.

"We dipped colors to him and steamed away in search of more profitable craft, which came much sooner than we expected, and at a time when we were cruising in and out among the Bahama Islands, in smooth water. Beyond a rather heavy sea was running, but the day was good and the sky clear.

**T**HE ship was called to quarters in a very short order, and was soon making the best speed she was capable of, that being about twelve and a half knots. My place was on the quarter deck, near the chests where the signals were kept. There had been two excellent signal quartermasters detailed to

me (Bob Scott and Lewis Locke)—old seamen, with remarkable histories. Scott had a fine field glass, and mine was a still better one; with it I could read signals at eight and ten miles. It belonged, long ago, to Col. Makepeace of the British army, and through it he had viewed the battle of Sebastopol during the Crimean war.

It was not long before we had the

and fell on the waves. We fired a blank cartridge to bring her to, but it did not stop her. She then flew a British ensign, and we sent a thirty-pound Parrot shell after her, which fell short by about a quarter of a mile. But we were gaining rapidly, and the next shot—a short-fuse shell—burst to one side of her, sending up a great volume of spray.

The executive officer, Lieut. Cromwell, was handling the gun—and he knew how. I heard him address the captain, who was on the bridge:

"Shall I sink her, sir? She's within range."

"No; fire one over her foremast, and load it with an empty shell with the plug out."

Away the missile went, making a noise that a "wildcat" locomotive would be a penny whistle, in comparison, and it brought her to time in the trough of the sea in short order.

During the last half hour of the chase she had been throwing her cargo overboard or else destroying it. Big straw mats kept floating past us, and the air was so thoroughly impregnated with "Old Tom" gin that some one said she was trying to get us all drunk.

We were not long in overtaking her as she slowed down, knowing full well what was to happen next.

With my glass I could plainly see the faces of every one in sight aboard of her, and the most amusing personage was the black cook—and he was black, the fact being emphasized by his having a white collar.

The whole headpiece roared above his head for some three feet or more. Her captain was a fat and rather jolly-looking Englishman (Capt. North); her mate was a vicious-looking devil, some six feet in height, with a crew of six others, each and all the very types of men that manned blockade-runners in those days. In short order a prize crew was sent aboard of her under the command of Gunner Pierce, and she steamed away to Key West for orders. Her captain and most of her crew we took aboard.

They amused themselves pulling

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object of our chase hull up, and her lookouts quickly recognized us as a Yankee gunboat. She was a long, rakish-looking thing—a side-wheeler, painted a pale blue-gray. Fore and aft sails, schooner rig, with short masts far apart. We crowded her out to sea, where she lost speed through her wheels being not always fully under water as she rose

**A**BOUT a week after her capture, I was on deck one dark, drizzly night, and standing near the smoke-stack. Some eight or ten men were huddled together in its deep shadow. They were earnestly whispering among themselves and, unnoticed, I drew near with the view of listening to what they were discussing. Fortunately it was for us that I did so. I at once discovered that it was the entire bunch of the Jupiter's crew—our prize crew—plotting a mutiny. They named quite a number of our own men who were in it, and they even designated those among themselves who were to assassinate our different officers. They planned to cap-

ture the ship; take her to Galveston, and fit her out as a rebel privateer. I slipped away unseen, and brought the whole matter to the attention of the captain within the next fifteen minutes. My report was hardly credited at first, but, to the best of recollection, another officer was directed to see if he could overhear what I had overheard, or anything that would confirm it. He soon returned to the captain's cabin and reported that my observations were entirely true. Capt. North, however, knew nothing of the scheme, while all the others were soon in double irons, including some undesirable characters of our own crew. They received their full deserts on our arrival at Key West.

When they were leaving us, Capt. North, just as he was going over the side, had an opportunity to speak to me, as I stood near the gangway. He placed a sixpence in my hand for a keepsake.

Lowering my voice to a whisper, I said: "Capt. North, what did you have in those straw mats that you threw overboard during the chase?"

He smiled and said: "If I don't tell you, now, 6,000 English Enfield rifles. Then, too," he said, "we sent to the bottom a few barrels of rebel buttons, many bolts of gray cloth, weighted with telegraph wire, and some other things." Enough said.

Our next capture did not amount to much—it was the schooner Anna Louisa, with no cargo. She was painted gray as usual, with a small crew composed of a lot of tough Britishers, of the kind that piled that sort of trade.

One day, some months after this, when well across the Gulf of Mexico we sighted a suspicious-looking steamer, nearly of our own size. She gave chase, but soon found that she was a very fast boat. We fired some fifty-six shells at her, but she kept pretty well out of range. At one time she swung around broadside to us, and hoisted a big Confederate flag—the white one that was used during the latter part of the war. We ran her into Galveston, where she loaded up with 500 bales of cotton! And with this magnificent cargo she steamed out one dark night, cautiously making her trip to Havana. We went into the same port while she lay at anchor there in the light south of the Morro. We were recognized, naturally. Just before sundown she manned her launch and pulled up within speaking distance of us—her mate, a big six-footer, being in command. They amused themselves pulling

around us and singing, at the top of their voices, such songs as "The Lone Star of Texas," "Dixie" and other Confederate songs of the day. Mr. Pierce, the officer of the deck, asked permission to turn the bilge-hose on them, but the request was not granted.

**I** WAS standing near the wardroom hatchway watching the performance. The mate was standing up on the after seat of the boat—a big man, with no hat on—was arms akimbo, and singing a most vulgar song, quite derogatory to the United States Navy and the federal government. One of our men came cautiously up out of the berth-deck hatch, forward. He carried an immense pumpkin, which he was balancing in his right hand, and one side of it was quite rotten and soft. He braced himself for a shot—and that pumpkin, in the next minute, like the shell from a ten-pound mortar, traveled through the air, the curve of the trajectory being most accurately calculated. To the surprise of all who witnessed it, the huge vegetable, rotten side down, lit with tremendous force directly on top of the head of the mate, who was still standing up in his boat. Down he went as though hit with a sledge-hammer, and the crew pulled away from us as fast as their oars could make it. None of us cheered or sang a line; but "Hail Columbia" would have come in there quite appropriately.

Next day the Diario, the leading newspaper in Havana, came out with a daring editorial, describing the incident in words to the effect that a "boat from the Confederate steamer Frances" was pulling around the Yankee gunboat Proteus last evening, and for entertainment, her crew was innocently singing some Christian hymns, when a low-down savage, a member of the crew of the Proteus, fired a great, rotten pumpkin at the mate in the boat, hitting him on the head, nearly breaking his neck, and instantly putting an end to the singing. The world may now know some thing of the class of ruffians who are defending the "Yankee government."

That pumpkin may stand as a fitting period to the present story.

**How Large Are Atoms?**

SCIENCE informs us that all bodies are composed of atoms and molecules, atoms being the smallest particles into which matter in general can be divided, and molecules the smallest particles into which any particular body can be divided without losing its identity. For instance, the smallest particles of salt which are able to retain the properties of salt are molecules, not atoms. Molecules may be split up into particles composed of sodium and particles composed of chlorine, and these elementary particles, which cannot again be divided, are atoms.

But no one has ever been able to see, or distinguish, a molecule or an atom. Yet the possibility of their being rendered visible has more than once been discussed. Reasons have been offered for believing that molecules are not indefinitely small in comparison with the wave length of light, which averages something like one-fifty-thousandth of an inch.

Some time ago a distinguished scientist investigated the question of the actual size of atoms and molecules and came to the conclusion that, at the largest, they might be one-twenty-five-millionth of an inch in diameter. That would make them so small that 500 could lie in a row within the length of a wave of light.

It is difficult to imagine that particles so minute should ever be rendered visible to human eyes, and yet, as has just been remarked, the possibility of seeing them is occasionally discussed by men of science.

But if such a feat of seeing ever is performed, it will certainly prove to be something more than a mere gratification of curiosity. Many of the most recalcitrant questions in science would be suddenly illuminated by the discovery of a means of watching an atom as we can now watch a rotifer under the microscope.

**Rapid Blueprinting.**

BLUEPRINTS from drawings can be made at a very rapid rate in the perfected electric printing machines, which are fitted with lamps that use an electric motor drives the blueprint paper along with the tracings so that both move at a rapid rate in front of the powerful electric lights. One of the machines in use at the offices of an engineering firm in Paris illustrates the method. At the top one can see the continuous roll of blueprint paper being fed into the machine, while under it from time to time the separate tracings are fed and are printed on the sensitized paper.

This machine produces about 700 prints a day of three feet width. A still more elaborate device is a combined arclight printer, washer and dryer known as the "heafel," also a Paris make. From 60 to 400 feet of paper an hour can be turned out in this way, all dried and ready for use.

**Soldier Ants.**

BEFORE the biological studies of London a naturalist described his studies of the African termites, or white ants. Certain individuals in every nest have no other apparent function except that of fighters or soldiers. Some have a long back, from which they eject an acrid, corrosive fluid; others inspire terror by making a loud clicking noise with their mandibles; but they neither shoot nor bite. One singular observation of the naturalist was that the soldier ants, which rush out to defend an attacked nest, do not return to the nest, but wander about and soon perish from exposure to the outside air.

## Stories About Bank of England

**T**HERE is much (that is romantic in the history of the Bank of England, sometimes called "The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street." Had it not been for a clever director, the bank would probably have suffered a fatal reverse about a century ago. A panic occurred among the bank-note holders and spread to an alarming extent almost before the bank people became aware of what was going on.

One morning, just before the opening of the bank, an angry and excited crowd thronged the street demanding cash for their notes. There was, it is said, actually double the money in notes in the hands of that mob than there was gold in the coffers of the bank, a circumstance that, naturally enough, presented a predicament of a bad sort. Gold must be got for every claimant, and that would take time. The directors sent employees with notes into the crowd, whose claims were met first, each being paid in exchequer and shillings.

It is said that only one person has ever succeeded in breaking into the bank. One day, rather more than forty years ago, the directors received an anonymous letter stating that the writer thereof would meet any person the bank might designate in the bullion rooms at midnight, upon condition, however, that the individual so designated be not armed. At first, of course, it was thought that this

unique suggestion was a hoax, but, also, precaution, officers searched the bullion vaults thoroughly to satisfy themselves that nothing had chanced that would enable any man to enter those rooms. They waited throughout the night, but beyond a peculiar scraping sound, that they attributed to nothing of a suspicious nature was heard or seen.

A week later, however, the directors were staggered at receiving a box in which lay several securities from the bank vaults. There was also a note stating that if the directors would send a man to the vaults at midnight the writer would meet them there after having broken in from the outside.

So a number of bank employees went down into the vaults at the appointed hour and waited. Finally the scraping noise was again heard and a light appeared at one end of the vaults. The light vanished, however, upon their approach. Then a man's voice, issuing, as it seemed, from the ground right under their feet, commanded them to put out their lanterns and a man carrying a dark lantern came on the scene. He explained that he was a sewer cleaner and that he had discovered a disused drain which ran directly into the bank vaults. He had stolen nothing, so the bank gave him a reward, which, it is said, ran into the thousands.